

Onward

What

Onward is an online, moderated forum that collects tangible student ideas and, through a responsive environment, demonstrates their value. The best ideas enter an implementation pipeline where, after consultation with relevant administrators and staff, they are executed by collaborative action to improve the Notre Dame community.

Why

Every Notre Dame administrator and Student Government officer works tirelessly for our University because we truly care about the Notre Dame experience - more specifically, about the lives of those students who have chosen to spend their time here. This is a difficult prospect. We face a dual challenge to acknowledge student concerns and to provide public, action-oriented responses to campus issues. Compounding this is the widespread student perception of a 'distance from the Dome,' phrasing used to decry supposedly out-of-touch administrators.

Onward provides a mechanism to bring all students into the process under a structured discussion. By encouraging students to post ideas and concerns and vote on those they care most about, we will be able to take a real-time pulse of campus and engage our largest asset, the Notre Dame community. Implementation, especially through collaboration between students and administrators, builds relationships between administrators and students and makes clear the investment that administrators have in student success and development. *Onward* also provides institutional memory so students can use it to find answers to their questions, reducing the number of times a policy has to be explained.

Who

Student Government Forum Steering Committee:

A collaboration of Department Directors who report to the Student Body President and direct the operations of the forum and its ancillary activities.

Moderation Team:

Student Government members who moderate the forum and do the day-to-day work of responses. They also assist in the development of plans for contacting faculty and staff stewards and monitor the implementation pipeline. As the issues in the pipeline progress, they give public updates about the current efforts.

Faculty & Staff Stewards:

Members of the Notre Dame community who commit to engaging with ideas posted on the forum. This group is comprised mostly of Directors in Student Affairs, Directors of campus services, and Deans of Undergraduate Studies.

How

Students will post ideas to the forum; other students will vote ideas up or down (approval or disapproval) and comment on them. The ideas are tied to students' Notre Dame accounts, encouraging professional and charitable communication, but just in case a moderation team will also look for profane posts. The most popular ideas, as filtered and grouped by the moderation team, as well as other ideas that are less popular but highly feasible, will be sent into the implementation pipeline with faculty/staff stewards.

Student Government will contact the appropriate faculty/staff steward(s) to discuss the potential outcomes of implementation when an issue merits consideration based on its popularity or feasibility. An appropriate response is determined to be one of three categories: action can be taken, action has already been taken, or action cannot be taken. Then, Student Government will respond using the 'Acknowledge, Inform, Continue Dialogue' model. Regardless of the action (or inaction) of the response, the goal will be to recognize the value in the students' ideas.

If an idea is to move forward, Student Government, the faculty/staff steward, and the person who posted the idea will collaborate to determine a timeline and an allocation of resources to make the idea a reality. Student Government will keep the student body updated on progress.

Launch:

The launch phase is crucial for this project, as it sets the tone for all future discourse that occurs. Therefore, *Onward* will begin with a soft launch to beta groups, who will be coached through the process of ideation and posting a tangible, actionable idea. Once the forum is open to the entire student body, these ideas will serve as models for how people should post their own ideas.

The full launch will involve a broad social media campaign, as this online medium reflects the online nature of the forum. It will also include a collaborative public activity to draw student attention to the existence of *Onward*.

Follow-up:

Promoting the responsiveness and involvement of administrators will be crucial to building respect and trust among the student body. Therefore, Student Government will celebrate successful initiatives by publicly highlighting those who work on them.

Conclusion

Student Government named this online forum after the famous lyric from our fight song because we believe that the spirit of Notre Dame is embodied in what we can achieve when we work together as one family. As Fr. Jenkins said, "Let no one ever say that we dreamed too small."

*While Her Loyal Sons Are Marching **Onward** to Victory*